

Questions pertaining to Solicitation#TIRNO-08-R-00004 – 3/11/2008

- (1) Section V, 1.0.b.0 (p. 68) notes that "Acknowledgement of Solicitation Amendments" is required with the proposal submission. Regarding any possible amendments to the solicitation:

(a) What is the timeframe during which the IRS would be able to issue an amendment to this solicitation?

There is no set timeframe for amendments. However, all amendments will be posted to the FedBizOpps and IRS websites. We strongly advise vendors to frequently check both websites for any changes to the solicitation.

(b) What is the best way to remain apprised of any such amendments? For example, would they be posted both to the Procurement section of the IRS website, and to FedBizOpps.gov? Is there a way to set up an email alert?

As mentioned above, all amendments will be posted to both websites. The FedBizOpps website is not within the purview of the IRS. However, we strongly advise vendors to frequently check both websites for any changes to the solicitation.

- (2) Section V. 1.0.e (p. 69) says that "Offerors are encouraged to submit multiple offers presenting alternative terms and conditions or commercial items for satisfying the requirements of this solicitation. Each offer submitted will be evaluated separately." Regarding this opportunity, would each offer be required to address the requirements of the RFP in full, or just those components of the RFP that would make one offer different from the other?

If an offeror chooses to submit multiple offers for a particular award group, it is advised that each offer addresses the requirements of the RFP in full, to allow each proposal to be evaluated separately. The offeror may include in any additional offers a cover sheet documenting all changes from the primary offer.

- (3) Section 2.1(B) of the RFP (p. 77) states, under the heading "TEMPORARY ACCOUNT ACCESS":

"Offerors shall provide five (5) temporary account numbers and/or passwords. The IRS will access the vendor's products/services during the proposal evaluation phase to subjectively evaluate the system's ease of use and for validation purposes."

Does this apply to a vendor proposing on only Award Group 1? If it does, would we assume the IRS wants us to submit at the time of proposal 5 copies of the CD product that we propose to offer under the contract?

Yes.

(4). In which volume should the following documents appear in the response:

- Section 3 (contract clauses)
- Attachment B - VPAT templates
- Attachment C – QASP

These documents should be part of the Volume II, Technical and Past Performance Proposal; however, the page limitation for this volume is not applicable to these documents.

(5). In Section 8.2.2.2 can you please provide a definition of "judicial interpretations"? Also, please differentiate judicial interpretations from state court and federal court cases.

Judicial interpretations are documents that explain how the judiciary should interpret or has interpreted the law, based on a stated theory or mode of thought. These include court cases, legal briefs, etc. as well as scholarly articles on given subjects of law.

(6). Would you list out the Treasury offices or bureaus that may be covered?

The Treasury Departmental Office is the only non-IRS office covered by this solicitation. Its employees include attorneys, economists, tax professionals and financial professionals.

(7). Ultimately how will you respond to these questions - directly - or through a posting on FedBizOpps?

Questions and answers from all potential vendors will be posted on both the FedBizOpps and IRS websites.

(8). With respect to Award Groups I, II and III, are each of these unique/distinct groups or is there overlap? If there is overlap what is the overlap for each Award Group?

*We have an estimated 30,000 IRS and 500 Treasury users of the electronic research services. There **is** an overlap of users among the three award groups; however, we cannot quantify the overlap amount.*

(9). Are we correct in our understanding that, while the IRS may contemplate multiple awards across the 3 Award Groups, a multiple award will NOT be made within an Award Group? For example, should the IRS award a contract for Award Group 2, is our understanding correct that such an Award Group 2 award would be made to a single vendor only, and not multiple vendors?

*The IRS **does not** contemplate awarding multiple contracts within a specific Award Group. Rather, we will evaluate each award group as a separate entity which could result in awarding potentially three contracts - one for each of the Award Groups. However, if a vendor can clearly demonstrate their ability to provide more than one of the award groups' services, the government will give consideration to this option and may award a single contract to that vendor for administrative efficiency.*

- (10) Section 9.6.1 states: The IRS seeks flexibility in providing access to the contractor's system. It is mandatory that the contractor propose an enterprise solution for managing user access that will be available no later than 90 days after contract award date. IRS will work with the contractor in developing any automated solution.

Does the IRS expect the enterprise solution to be available regardless of whether or not a user manually enters assigned credentials? "Section 7.5.7 states: It is highly desirable that a system access method be provided that does not require individual user IDs or passwords".

An enterprise solution for managing user access may or may not involve user IDs and passwords. If the contractor proposes the use of user IDs and passwords, then the proposed enterprise solution must address how these are to be managed. If the contractor proposes an access method that does not require user IDs and passwords, then the proposed enterprise solution must address how access is to be facilitated.

The vendor shall fully describe how access is to be granted to their system.

- (11) Section 9.6.2.1 states: It is mandatory that the contractor provide IRS with the ability to create a report listing all users of the system, which includes all field information that has been captured for each user.

Can the report be an online screen that supports paging or if it needs to be a report object (test, excel, pdf) that must be generated so it can be given to other individuals? If it needs to be a document object, what format is mandatory?

The IRS will accept reports through either online access or as delivered report objects. Any of the above formats are acceptable, but we suggest that spreadsheet or database formats allow for easier analysis of the data.

- (12) (Section 1194.21)(Section 1194.22) Voluntary Product Accessibility Template

Was the VPAT for Section 1194.21, Software Applications and Operating Systems – Detail, accidentally omitted from the RFP, or did they intentionally exclude it, meaning we're not required to fill it out?

The VPAT for Section 1194.21 is referenced in sub-section (m) of the VPAT for Section 1194.22. If this subsection applies to your product, please complete the VPAT for 1194.21 (attached).

- (13) Volume II - technical and past performance proposal: Each Offeror's Technical Proposal shall have a maximum number of 100 pages that the Technical Evaluation Panel will evaluate. Is the 100 page limit for Vol. II, Technical proposal, per award group? If a vendor bids for 1, 2 or 3 awards, are they limited to 100 pages per award group or total, regardless of number of awards bid?

The page limitation for the Technical Proposal is 100 pages for each of the award groups for which the offeror has made a proposal. This means that if a vendor makes a

proposal for all 3 award groups, their Technical Proposal could have a maximum of 300 pages.

*However, the limitation **per award group** is still 100 pages. For example, a vendor could **NOT** have 150 pages discussing one award group and 50 pages on a second, to total 200.*

- (14) Section 7.4.3 states: The product shall have proven and known ability to provide LAN/WAN access.
Please provide clarification of requirement.

IRS users must be able to access this product using our internal network, which routes traffic through a firewall. The firewall presents an IP address to the Internet that is not unique in its association to a user. The vendor's product must be able to return any user requests to the appropriate user without relying on the IP address presented.

- (15) Section 7.5.2 states: It is highly desirable that an Intranet version of this product be available. If offered, the contractor shall fully describe all system requirements for implementation of this Intranet-based service, as well as any additional costs for the Intranet-based service.

What is meant by an "Intranet version of this product"?
Is this simply a request for the means to access the main research website from within the IRS Intranet?

An Intranet version of the product would be a version housed entirely behind the IRS firewall.

- (16) Section 6.2.3 states: Additionally, the IRS or the Office of Chief Counsel of the IRS may create new forms of guidance during the term of this contract. Once such guidance is instituted and published, it is expected that it will also be included at no additional cost.

This appears to be different than the terms of 6.3.2 because there is no reference to space restrictions in this context. Because this provision requires the vendor to include additional material on the CD, current size of which is unavailable, can the IRS clarify the vendor's responsibility under this RFP to add additional CDs if needed, add additional content to the point it fills the CD, or to consult with the IRS to determine what content best meets their needs?

It is the vendor's responsibility to consult with the IRS COTR if CD space limitations require the removal of some content to allow inclusion of additional required content.

- (17) Section 6.3.1 states: It is highly desirable that at least one Commercial Tax Service be provided. Commercial Tax Services are commentaries on tax law and are generally categorized into two types:
- Annotated tax services are organized by IRC section and are explanatory in nature.
 - Topical tax services are organized by broad topic or issue and are analytical in nature.
 - The contractor shall provide a listing of all the Commercial Tax Services offered in their proposal

For purposes of the RFP, the inclusion of a Commercial Tax Services is a highly desirable feature. If services are offered that consist of topical tax services as stated in 6.3.1 but are not otherwise commercially available or are a subset of a commercially available service, will they be considered a commercial tax service and hence a highly desirable feature for purposes of this proposal ?

The vendor shall fully describe all offered content which is intended to meet this requirement. As a highly desirable feature, it will be evaluated based on how well it meets IRS needs as stated in the RFP.

- (18) Will questions and answers from all potential contractors be posted?

All questions and answers from all potential vendors will be posted on both the FedBizOps and IRS websites.

- (19) We understand that the Government intends to measure: 1. Service Availability, 2. Content Availability, 3. Training, 4. ID/Password Issuance, and 5. Customer/Technical support, in accordance with the parameters set forth on pages 64 and 65 of the RFP. It is our understanding that the government will review bidders' Implementation/Operation plans submitted in response to Section 9.1 and bidders' responses to Section 2.0 Notification of Changes to Content or Service for relevant information regarding bidders' ability to meet the government's measurement standards. If the government needs additional information to assess bidders' capability in this regard, the government will do so by clarification. Is our understanding correct?

The Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan (QASP), Attachment 3, of the RFP is provided as a guide to assist potential vendors in developing adequate quality assurance methods to ensure successful contract performance. This document may be revised after contract award to incorporate the contractor's comments and recommendations to ensure a successful partnership between the Government and the Contractor. The main purpose of the QASP is to provide Government surveillance and oversight of the Contractor's quality control efforts to assure that they are timely, effective and are delivering the results specified in the contract or task order. In addition to the information provided in a vendor's Implementation/Operation plans and responses to Section 2.0 Notification of Changes to Content and Service, the Government will evaluate all other pertinent information in the proposal as they relate to the metrics stated in the QASP.